

REMARKS

Each of the Claims (1-20) in the parent application have been cancelled without prejudice and are replaced by this Preliminary Amendment with new Claims 21-28. These new claims address those issues raised by the Examiner in the parent case. These new claims are fully supported throughout the specification, including at paragraphs [83] – [94]. These new claims are all distinguishable over the Examiner's comments, and a brief discussion of this is provided below for clarity.

In its simplest terms, the present invention can be characterized as allowing a keyword-search-type search to be performed using a Boolean expression that is comprised of topic words, wherein the topics words are extracted from an associative-document-search-type database. See [90] and [92]. According to this aspect of the invention, a synthetic metasearch is combined with a plurality of associative-document-search type databases and a plurality of keyword-search-type databases. Later searches using information gained through prior searches is fully supported. In this way, users may efficiently retrieve information from various database types without changing their search program for each different type of database. See [148].

In the parent case, the Examiner made several rejections related to U.S. Patent No. 5,987,460 to Niwa ("Niwa"), U.S. Patent No. 5,826,261 to Spencer ("Spencer"), European Patent No. EP 0851368 A2 to Nielsen ("Nielsen"), and U.S. Patent No. 5,982,370 to Kamper ("Kamper"). Each of these references will now be discussed.

Niwa discloses a search system which shows a graph using a topic word as a node in an area for displaying a topic-word (Figs. 5 and 8). However, Niwa does not disclose or suggest a keyword-search-type search effectuated using a Boolean expression comprising topic words extracted by utilizing an associative-document-search-type database.

Spencer discloses a search system for searching a plurality of databases (Fig. 1, etc.). However, Spencer also does not disclose or suggest a keyword-search-type search using a Boolean expression comprising topic words extracted by utilizing an associative-document-search-type database. Again, this efficient mixing a various database types in a single search engine is included in each claim and is missing in the cited art.

Nielsen discloses a graphical user interface for a text search system including text entry fields and menus of operators from which a search query is composed (see abstract). When using the Nielsen invention, the user specifies an advanced query using a GUI drawing,

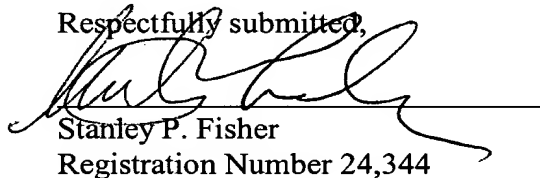
the exact design of which typically includes Boolean search operator (lines 33-35, page 4). When the user connects to a server-based search engine over the network, the server downloads an html document to the client process for display (lines 45-47, page 8). However, Nielsen does not show document retrieval at all. Thus, Nielsen does not disclose or suggest a keyword-search-type search using a Boolean expression comprising topic words extracted by utilizing an associative-document-search-type database.

Kamper discloses a search interface having a graphic device used as a highlighting tool to identify a search term (see abstract line 66 of col. 6 – line 1 of col. 7). The method begins by having the user select one of the plurality of Internet search engines for performing a search (lines 26-32 of col.3). However, Kamper does not disclose or suggest a keyword-search-type search using a Boolean expression comprising topic words extracted by utilizing an associative-document-search-type database.

In sum, none of the cited references disclose, teach or suggest the aspect of the invention detailed above. This feature allows for the efficient retrieval of information from disparate databases in a streamlined fashion through a single interface. See [110] and [148].

Applicants believe that all claims of the present invention are now in condition for final allowance. As outlined above, each of these claims is fully supported throughout the specification. If the Examiner feels that any issues remain outstanding, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicant's attorney at the contact information below.

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June 21, 2004